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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER INONI ON ELECAM

REF: YAOUNDE 28

Classified By: Ambassador Janet E. Garvey for reasons 1.4 (d) and (e)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador recently expressed concerns about ELECAM to Prime Minister Ephriam Inoni. Inoni lamented Biya's choice of individuals to serve as ELECAM's General Manager and members of the board, but admitted that they were included among the list of 143 names he submitted to President Biya. Nonetheless, he hoped the international community would not give up on ELECAM or support for the 2011 presidential election. End summary.

¶2. (C) In a January 15 meeting, Ambassador told Prime Minister Inoni that she was representing the 8 plus 6 group of Chiefs of Mission (reftel) in expressing concern about the makeup of the new Electoral Commission, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM). The list is not broadly representative and does not give us confidence about Cameroon's ability to have a free and fair election in 2011, she said. Ambassador noted that the USG and other members of the 8 plus 6 would be making individual decisions about any public response to ELECAM and possible consequences for our programs. UK Charge Gillian Edwards accompanied Ambassador, representing the Commonwealth and European Union.

¶3. (C) The process of naming ELECAM was not finished, Inoni responded, noting that the government was still "receiving reactions," which he hoped to discuss with President Biya soon. The Government of Cameroon (GRC) hoped to work with international partners in preparing for the 2011 election, he said, arguing that it was possible for the named members to work independently and that the international community should "not give up on ELECAM".

¶4. (C) Inoni confided that he had sent Biya a list of 143 names, all thoroughly vetted and broadly representative of Cameroonian society and politics. However, Biya had passed over the individuals whom Inoni found most qualified and instead selected a slate of individuals that was "not what I would have liked to see." Biya reportedly rejected one former prominent member of the Observatoire National des Elections (ONEL) because she was in a dispute with the government over a legal bill and rejected another who he found too controversial with traditional leaders in his region.

¶5. (SBU) Ambassador mentioned concerns about alleged fraud committed by the new President of ELECAM Samuel Azuu Fonkam. Inoni responded that if this is true it's "not acceptable" and he hoped we would share any information about this case so he could take appropriate action.

¶6. (C) Comment: Inoni's influence has appeared to be waning for some time and many expect him to be replaced in a long awaited Cabinet shuffle. He has been our (and the 8 plus 6) principle interlocutor on ELECAM and he is often the polished public face of the government. However, his

admission that his long list of names was rejected suggests
he has limited influence over ELECAM decisions.
GARVEY